

St. Mary Rehabilitation Working Group
Meeting Minutes 3-19-08
APPROVED

Working Group Members Present: Lt. Governor John Bohlinger, Randy Reed, Dolores Plumage, Marko Manoukian, Jennifer Brandon, Michael DesRosier, Paul Tuss, Wes Pankratz, Don Wilson, Dave Peterson, Gary Anderson, and Wade Jones (alternate for Bruce Hould).

Alternates: Kay Blatter (alternate for Jennifer Brandon).

Absent: Steve Page, Wade Engstrom, Mike Barthel, Randy Perez, and Matt McCann.

Others: Mike Dailey and Erling Juel.

Ex-Officio Members Present: Bonnie Keller, (Senator Baucus), Cheryl McCarthy, (Senator Tester), and Seth Broesder, (Congressman Rehberg).

DNRC/State Present: Paul Azevedo-State Coordinator and Judy Edwards-MT Consensus Council.

Welcome & Introductions:

- Lt. Governor John Bohlinger: Confirmed his and the State of Montana's interest and support in the St. Mary Rehabilitation project. The next phase is to develop a funding formula for the 25% cost share. His office is fully engaged and will assist the working group in moving forward. He attended the National Lt. Governor's Conference in Washington, D.C. and met with both Senator Baucus and Congressman Rehberg to review the project and they are very supportive. Randy Reed thanked Lt. Governor Bohlinger for his participation and support.

Approve Minutes:

- December 12, 2007 St. Mary Rehabilitation Working Group meeting minutes. No corrections or changes. Approved.
- January 17, 2008 Executive Committee meeting minutes. No corrections or changes. Approved.

Work Group Action:

- Larry Mires, Executive Director. Renew contract and increase salary by 3.5%. Approved.

***Informational Updates:**

- Larry Mires, Randy Reed, and Paul Azevedo traveled to Washington, D.C. in February. They met with all three offices of MT's Congressional Delegation, House and Senate Appropriations Committee staff, Commissioner Johnson with

the Bureau of Reclamation, and senior staff of the Corp of Engineers. They provided education and a progress report on the status of the St. Mary Rehabilitation project.

- Paul Azevedo reported the House and Senate appropriations subcommittee staff did not respond positively for FY09 funding requests for the St Mary project. Paul reported that receiving approval from the appropriation staff is tough and the challenge is to overcome their negative response.
- Randy Reed to testify in April to committee (Senate Energy & Resource). Larry Mires requested the committee invite Don Wilson to testify also if available.
- The Milk River Project - St. Mary Diversion and Conveyance Works is the poster child for aging infrastructure.
- Kris Polly has been appointed the new Deputy Commissioner, External and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Bureau of Reclamation. He is supportive of issues relating to the Milk River and has offered help with some of the administration issues. Kris was formally with the National Water Association.
- Commissioner Johnson is fully supportive of the project and for authorizing it under the Army Corp.
- Lt. Governor Bohlinger – The State of Montana made the first initial investment of \$10 million in Bonding Authority for this problem, which shows the desire the people of Montana have to support the project.

Format of future meetings: Discussion

- Paul Azevedo – The theme for the last 4 years has been the process, collectively, and individually, to raise attention for this project, locally as well as nationally. Discussion requested on changing the meeting format to quarterly instead of monthly meetings.
- Don Wilson – part of the discussion by the Executive Committee in setting the meeting agenda was the issue of extending the agenda. If the meetings were moved to quarterly the agendas would be extended and meetings would need to be all day or possibly more than 1 day to address the agenda items.
- Gary Anderson – Monthly meetings have not been regular, and the working group has fallen behind in some things, or items have been forgotten and not followed up on. More organization is needed and a better system for getting information out to the members.
- Michael DesRosier mentioned that the working group needs to meet regularly to check progress on the different stages of projects.
- Gary Anderson requested draft meeting minutes be sent out a week prior to the meeting.
- Paul Azevedo - Working Group members had previously decided that a summary of agreements and action items were to be sent out one week after the meeting.
- Development of a SMRWG newsletter would be a good idea to keep members informed between meetings.
- Dolores Plumage – sees the importance of what the working group is working on – she sees the need to be habitually involved because it is possible to fall off the radar otherwise. Regular monthly meetings are needed to remain consistent.

- Lt. Gov Bohlinger – is available to meet as frequently as requested or needed, either monthly or quarterly.
- Discussion on the possibility of conference or meetings via net. Prior research indicated these options are too expensive.

Motion approved to continue monthly meeting format.

Discussion Items:

- Larry Mires would like approval to invite citizens from Canada to attend the next scheduled Working Group meeting. Discussion on the subject and consensus reached to add the topic to the next meeting agenda before inviting Canadian citizens.
- Mike Dailey thought that the Canadian member should be a citizen, not necessarily an appointment (especially if the Working Group approves a Canadian as a voting member).

Appropriation request for 09:

- Paul Azevedo provided an overview of federal appropriations request for FY09. Conversations with Congressional offices and House and Senate appropriations subcommittee staff, strongly suggested that the draft request for \$10 million needed to be reexamined. Advice received in D.C. was to limit request to what Army Corps could spend in the first year. Paul revised the budget to \$4,985.00. The COE needs to be more aggressive on the Administrative Rule Making – and addressing responsibilities of all entities if construction is to begin by 2011.
- The Milk River Joint Board of Control (MRJBOC aka JBOC) has requested Senator Hanson to request Legislative Services to research a Milk River Basin entity. They are also researching the possibility of amending the existing JBOC's by-laws and if it were amended would it accomplish the same thing as an "authority" (right now it is in a research mode). Blackfeet & Fort Belknap tribes need to be voting members. Preliminary discussion was that it may be possible to include tribe input – authority must be able to negotiate with sovereigns, local Governments, etc.
- All basin interests are currently represented on the Working Group's membership.

Blackfeet Compact:

- Don Wilson provided an update on the Blackfeet Compact - it is complete for all intents and purposes. The language has been drafted and it just needs to be presented to Congress for ratification. The BOR and BIA are both the strongest opponents (relates to allocation of water from St. Mary (Blackfeet)). Don asked that everyone thank the Compact people because they have done a wonderful job.
- Randy Perez – having discussion today with Fort Belknap Water Compact.

Other topics:

- Judy Edwards reported that the Montana Consensus Council will cease operations effective June 30, 2008. She has been working on the St. Mary Project through a contract with DNRC. Her contract with DNRC will also expire on June 31, 2008.
- Board approved \$720 for signage on siphon tub trailer.
- Board approved SMRWG logo.
- Board approved \$600 for hard hats and vests with SMRWG logo for touring projection sites and promotion of the SMRWG. Dolores Plumage expressed reservations with expending the funds when there were other needs in the basin. However, she agreed not to block the group's action.
- Larry Mires will research other marketing ideas, bumper stickers and/or window stickers, and lapel pins with the SMRWG logo to hand out to gain recognition for the SMRWG. Board approved the Outreach Committee to meet on this issue and report back to the Board.
- Upcoming tours – Board approved Larry Mires to proceed and set up tours for Senate and House subcommittees, the Assistant Secretary of the Army and staff, Commissioner of Reclamation and staff, State, Tribe and Local Bureau.
- Discussion for future meetings: Add Milk River to the working group name.
- Add Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) to next agenda. Discussion needed on attending meetings when MRRIC is fully established.

Public Comment:

- Pat Thomas requested a letter of support from the working group for problems the Blackfeet Tribal irrigators are currently experiencing. Delores Plumage asked Pat Thomas to send a letter specifying the issues and problems of the Blackfeet Tribe to Don Wilson. Pat agreed to send a letter to Don Wilson as soon as possible, so the Executive Committee has time to draft a letter in support of the Blackfeet Tribe before the deadline (due by April 12th).